

## STATISTICAL REPORTS

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The first thing necessary for the correction of a wrong condition is its discovery. Fever must be discovered before it can be cured. So a wrong condition in church government, polity, practice or methods must be laid open to our understanding before we shall undertake to remedy it.

This report has brought to my notice many things to be emulated by us all. Some things will appear as I proceed which are grounds of serious apprehension, and call loudly for change. Others inspire with hope and reveal to us the very foundations of our future progress, and the hope of our success. A new period is opening for the Brethren church. Her swaddling bands are being exchanged for the apparel of vigorous youth. May God make us wise to conserve the true and courageous, to destroy the false, the fictitious, the showy, the ignorant and the unwise as we shall discover them!

Seventy-seven churches responded to the letter and blanks sent out by the secretary. While this is not what ought to have responded, yet even this is not in vain, inasmuch as we believe it will stimulate those churches which did fill out the blanks to keep a more careful and thorough record of church work in the local congregations.

In these churches there are an aggregate of 5700 members. Two, however, did not report their membership. This suggests the thought, that as long as some do not understand the value of statistics, and are unwilling to answer questions, the purpose of which they do not see, the Brethren church must go before the world with the report of a membership much smaller than it really is. This number, 5700, we know must be only about one third of our real numerical strength. Sixty-eight of these own their church houses in fee simple, and these houses represent a reported value of \$94,700.

Eight churches are owned in part. Services are held in 108 places by these 77 congregations. Only 8 own a parsonage.

Last year there were held in these 77 charges 87 revivals. Eleven reported no revivals last year. In these 87 revivals there were 530 accessions. There were 201 accessions outside of revivals. This shows some good pastoral work. 589 were received by baptism, 77 by letter, and 80 by relation from churches which practice apostolic trine immersion. This shows an average of six and one tenth converts to each revival. In 12 revivals there were no converts.

In 8 churches reported there was not a conversion last year. Of course, that indicates that something is wrong somewhere.

In these churches there were 47 lost by death last year, 70 by granting letter, 74 by withdrawal without a letter and 18 by ex-communication.

Of the 5700 members 1774 are males, 2730 females. This shows that our membership is composed of far more women than men. In fact, if the proportion is as true of

the whole brotherhood, as of these 77 congregations, for every 100 women there are not 70 men among our members. Why this is I am not yet fully decided. I presume that compared with many years ago, the comparison would be in favor of the men of today. However, as a possible explanation, we would suggest two reasons: 1. That religion has been thought to be the business of women and children and that any manly fellow will have nothing to do with it. 2. That men are those who are given to those stimulants and narcotics, and those forms of vice which modern science has shown to be injurious to body, mind and spirit, and so have these largely to blame for the comparatively low plane of religion among their sex. Men will never be as open to the gospel as women until they use as little tobacco and drink as women. Thank God! our men and boys are beginning to see differently on both these questions.

The small number of ex-communications suggests three questions: "Is the standard of membership so high that none need to be deprived of fellowship?" "Do we too easily overlook sin in our members?" "Do we as a church believe in ex-communication?"

It can easily be seen that we should very naturally be shy of a doctrine which deprived many of us of former church relations, and made wounds never to be healed in this world.

Perhaps we do well to be extremely careful to avoid a doctrine which is so pernicious when wrested from its biblical form and spirit. Yet it must sometimes be exercised. However, I rejoice that the number is no larger than it is.

The average attendance at the services of these 77 churches is 83 17-27. The average length of pastorate is a little over four years. The shortest is two weeks, the longest thirty years.

The other facts in each report points in almost every case to the benefit of long pastorates, especially where the pastor is regularly paid and is a worker. Short pastorates are not productive of the best results if the pastor is a good man. Too often the people tire of a preacher as soon as the novelty is worn off, or as he begins to find out and upbraid their daring sins, and thus gets into a position to really know and help them. Then they must have another. It takes most preachers at least a year to learn the people. How can a man do any abiding work who is forever trotting from one congregation to another? And the report shows that those congregations are in bad shape which are always having a new preacher. Sometimes a minister is found who does not stay at one place long. He preaches until he ceases to tickle the ears of the people, and then wants new worlds to conquer. However, we as a church have reason to be thankful that we have so few such. Long pastorates seem as a rule to be best for both pastor and people. Brother Holsinger once quoted in the EVANGELIST that old proverb, "rolling stones gather no moss." It is as true of the ground over which they roll.

Six hundred and twenty three young men were reported among our members. Twenty churches reported none. Are the young men being neglected in our ministries, brethren? Jesus was a young man. Many of his apostles were young men. Let us not neglect them.

## PRAYER MEETINGS.

A startling fact is brought out in the reports concerning the prayer meetings. Forty-two reported prayer meetings. Thirty one reported that they had none. From this report it is seen that we do not unanimously believe in prayer meetings. It can be safely stated that no church can accomplish its mission under God which has no prayer meeting. The very meeting that was first held by the disciples, to which the early church flocked to a man and from which the preaching service was developed after many years, is not to be found in almost one-half of our churches! Think of it! And we are they who claim to believe in "the gospel, the whole gospel, and nothing but the gospel." I venture the assertion that there is not a congregation where by proper efforts on the part of the people, and by proper teaching by the pastor, a prayer meeting cannot be held at least six months of the year. These are the meetings that will count in all that goes to forward Christian life and growth. And more wonderful still the proportion of men in the prayer meetings is only about 36 15 per cent. of those present. Why? Let the judgment day answer.

The average attendance at these meetings where they are held is quite good. And I think the number of such meetings are increasing. However, it will be sometime before we shall get back to the simplicity and fervor of early Christianity. But, O, to attain unto that state of piety!

## SISTERS' SOCIETIES

Forty-two churches reported sisters' societies of some sort, of which 37 are S. S. C. E's. The results of the questions relative to the S. S. C. E., like those concerning the Sunday-school and young people's societies were not very satisfactory, simply because so many did not answer them at all, which indicates one of two things, either that the church's pastor and officials do not have the church work in hand and proper records kept, or that they did not care to take the time to find out the conditions asked about.

The membership and average attendance of the sisters' societies are encouraging indeed, as well as the moneys collected by them, which is reported as \$1384.32 for 23 societies. This speaks volumes for the work of Sister Grossnickle—Hetrick as organizer when she was in the field. It is possible that the church would do well to sit at the feet of the S. S. C. E., and learn methods for the prosecution of mission work, Publishing House, etc.

Why would not a national traveling representative of the church to push the mission cause, to take collections, to talk up the endowment for the Publishing House and to secure students and bequests for the College, be a successful venture?

(To be concluded next week.)